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AFPA provide submission to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee

COVER STORY P 3

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Forestry extinguishes prescribed burning criticism

FORESTRY Australia has poured water on the latest bushfire research that suggested prescribed burning could make Australian forests more flammable.

"Scientific consensus amongst bushfire scientists confirms that prescribed burning is a key tool in managing bushfires," Forestry Australia Science Policy Adviser Dr Tony Bartlett (AFSM) said.

"While there is no panacea for reducing the impacts of catastrophic bushfires, prescribed burning is a scientifically proven part of the solution. Simply, reduced fuel levels in forests will reduce the severity of bushfires on all bar the most catastrophic fire weather conditions.

"Any criticism that prescribed burning can make Australian forests more flammable is misguided. Criticising prescribed burning is like dismissing the value of seat belts in cars because people still die in car accidents. Both seat belts



1/ The recent suggestion that prescribed burning makes forests more flammable has been dismissed by the industry body.



2/ Forestry Australia says the nations management system is based on decades of research with the country at the forefront of fire management.

and prescribed burns are highly beneficial most of the time.

"Forestry Australia's view is that using cool burning to reduce fuel hazards is critical to good forest fire management and very consistent with the way Aboriginal people managed these forests for thousands of years.

"Reducing the risks from bushfires in forest areas should include well-planned, risk-based strategic programs of prescribed burning, silvicultural

management, fuel breaks and track maintenance, with appropriate public consultation.

"Importantly, Australia's bushfire management is based on decades of on-ground research and lived experience. While new ideas on how to improve bushfire management are always welcome, it is essential

that untested theoretical concepts are carefully considered in light of the existing knowledge on how wildfires behave in Australian forests."

"Increased investment in prevention and preparedness is essential to achieving enhanced management of fire and to address the increased risk of more frequent and severe bushfires." Dr Bartlett added that "the claim that further investment in drone technologies can contain bushfires has not been proven."

“COOL BURNING TO REDUCE FUEL HAZARDS IS CRITICAL”



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Plantation forestry inadvertently captured in the drafting of bill

THE Australian Forests Products Association (AFPA) has given feedback on the Government amendments to the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share – Integrity and Transparency) Bill 2023. In a letter dated January 10, 2024, the AFPA says it and its members believe that multinational companies should pay their fair share of tax.

"AFPA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Government amendments to the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share – Integrity and Transparency) Bill 2023 (Government amendments)," the letter states.

"Plantation forestry was never the intended target of the Bill and has been inadvertently captured in the drafting of the Bill. As such, we are pleased to see some changes in the Government amendments to reduce the Bill's negative impact on the Australian plantation forestry sector.

"However, AFPA remains concerned that the Bill (even with the Government amendments) will effectively cease plantation forestry expansion in Australia. The Bill (even with the Government amendments) is still contrary to the Albanese Government's election commitments in relation to plantation forestry,¹



1/ The bill amendments will see a 50% slash in debt costs companies can claim.

2/ AFPA Senior policy writer Sara Bray has provided the submission.

expansion in Australia.

AFPA represents the majority of large plantation forest growers and timber mills and paper manufacturers around Australia.

"Plantation forestry expansion is not only a priority for forest growers. It is the number one priority across the entire supply chain, including harvesting contractors, timber mills and paper manufacturers. Any chilling effect on plantation expansion negatively impacts the entire supply chain including these downstream manufacturers, and severely limits Australia's future capacity to supply the building industry's timber needs for housing expansion, limits Australia's action on climate change and Australia's plan to replace fossil-fuel-based plastics."

The letter is accompanied by a full submission which covers examples of the impact on companies which

varies, but in the example set out in the submission, and shows the company worse off in both scenarios:

Tax implication following the implementation of the Bill (with Government amendments):

Existing operation 50,000 ha:

An additional \$63 per hectare per year in tax, or \$1890 per hectare over 30 years.

1,000 ha expansion of existing operations with new plantation forestry establishment:

Over the 15 years of denied deductions, this is \$154 per hectare per year worse off or \$2,310 p

"AFPA respectfully asks that changes be made by the Australian Government to ensure that the Australian forestry sector is not negatively impacted by the Bill," the letter continues.

"Whilst AFPA and its members are agnostic as to the method through which this can occur, to assist the committee, we recommend the following:

- Treasury consult with AFPA to propose options to remove the impact of the Bill on plantation forestry expansion; or
- The Government introduce forestry policy initiatives which offset the increase in tax placed on plantation forestry sector.

"The Australian Forest Products Association stands ready to provide additional information to assist the committee with its work."

Cont P 7

Vale Max Ramien

LEAVING a long legacy in the timber industry, Max Ramien from Ramiens Timber in Dubbo has passed away.

Max was the driving force behind Ramiens Timber for 43 years. After taking over the reins from his late father, Max Ramien Senior, in 2005. He transformed the business into an industry-leading timber merchant specialising in Cypress.

The journey of Ramiens Timber has been one of adaptation and growth. Max navigated the transition from a sawmill to an award-winning timber merchant, overcoming challenges such as the closure of mills in regional towns. Under his leadership, the business earned accolades, including being crowned Australia's 'Best Timber Merchant' at our 2015 Awards.



Max (left) was the force behind Ramiens Timber for over 40 years.

Max's vision extended to the creation of a 1000-square-meter showroom, showcasing an extensive range of timber products, from flooring to decking and joinery. The on-site joinery, spanning another 1000 square meters, became the hub for crafting custom furniture and innovative timber solutions. It was also a hub for training, where one of our very own apprentices learned his

trade under Max's guidance and teachings.

With Max at the helm, Ramiens Timber not only embraced speciality timbers and Australian hardwoods but also ventured into servicing a broad customer base, including trade, DIY, retail and commercial clients. The business reach extended beyond Dubbo, delivering speciality timbers to locations

as far as Sydney and Adelaide.

Max Ramen's legacy is one of resilience, innovation, and a commitment to delivering exceptional timber solutions. His impact on the timber industry and community will be remembered and celebrated.

Ramiens Timbers are passionate timber merchants and have been in the same location since 1960. Their unique one-stop shop offers materials from the ground up for residential or commercial project.

A spokesperson for NTHA said "Our heartfelt condolences go out to Heather and Max's family, friends and the entire Ramiens Timber community during this difficult time".

A funeral service was held for Max on January 22nd.

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Forestry industry signs accord to establish pan sector body

TEN New Zealand organisations have signed an accord establishing as a pan sector body. Called the NZ Forest & Wood Sector Forum (NZFWSF), sector associations will engage on issues of common interest or concern to the national industry and act as a spokesperson and point of contact for the industry with Government and other relevant bodies where appropriate.

The NZFWSF will improve communication throughout the forestry supply chain to pursue and ensure continued growth and to manage issues with the interest of the whole sector in mind.

Forestry Industry Contractors Association CEO and NZFWSF spokesperson Prue Younger says the NZFWSF's collective advocacy will be for policies that are socially responsible,

“BENEFICIAL ‘WHOLE OF INDUSTRY’ VOICE

environmentally, and ecologically sustainable, internationally competitive, and profitable.

“The greater and long-term goal for the pan sector initiative is the desire to improve the coordination and collaboration of the sector and make it communicate, promote, and improve the total value chain,” she says.

“The benefit of a common and collective ‘whole of industry’ voice, with direction and future opportunities stands to be shared with the industry and Government providing credibility that the ‘whole of industry’ is backing the content.”

The pan sector group was an



1/ *The association will engage on issues of common interest or concern to the national industry*

2/ *The NZFWSF will improve communication throughout the forestry supply chain.*

outcome of a ‘Forestry Supply Chain – Pan Sector Meeting’ held on July 26 in Rotorua. The hui provided a shared understanding of the problems and opportunities the sector faced in a 15-year crisis for the forestry industry.

“Collective discussions were had around what change would look like to generate a sustainable operating model that we don’t currently have,” says Prue.

“This collective direction setting can better guide decisions for the future and define what can be done more effectively, more efficiently and potentially what can be rationalised or minimised.”

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NTHA announce dates for 2024 State Awards

THE National Timber and Hardware Association (NTHA) have released the dates of their 2024 state awards.

The awards circuit will kick off in Victoria on the 14th June for the Vic/Tas awards at Metropolis Events, Southbank. Following that all eyes will be on Queensland with their awards to take place at Brisbane City Hall on July 27th. From there the red carpet will be rolled out for South Australia with the National Wine Centre in Adelaide to hold the SA event on August 9th.



David Little (L) CEO of NTHA will be among those attending the 2024 State Awards as they do the rounds of the nation. Pictured here presenting 20 year membership award to Meyer Timber.

appreciate timber merchants, hardware stores, suppliers, manufacturers and individuals who consistently go above and beyond, contributing significantly to the success of either your business or the industry as a whole.

The event also creates a wonderful opportunity for those within the industry to come together, network and celebrate success and achievements.

“Mark your calendars now to ensure you don't miss out on an evening filled with recognition, celebration and networking,” a spokesperson for NTHA said.

More details are yet to come however sponsorship opportunities for the events are now available with enquiries to be made to alicia@ntha.com.au.

“ A TIME TO CELEBRATE INDUSTRY SUCCESS ”

The NSW awards will be on September 13th at the Hilton with NTHA then wrapping up the state awards with the Western Australia event to take place in Perth on October 11.

The NTHA Awards hold

a prestigious status as the leading event within the timber & hardware industry, where excellence and achievements are acknowledged.

This platform offers a valuable opportunity to

QR coding to assist in tracking valuable timber

INDIAN-BASED Institute for Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) has decided to do with its project aimed at identifying the origin of seized timber and preventing its smuggling. The idea behind ‘Project Timber Tracking of Red Sanders’ (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) is to use novel barcodes to distinguish

red sanders from other *Pterocarpus* species. The study by IFGTB, functioning under the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, is funded by the National Biodiversity Authority.

Genome sequencing of red sanders grown in each region is underway and location-specific DNA markers will be

developed for each population and will be unique to a particular location.

When red sanders timber is seized, these markers can be used to check where the timber is from and whether the logs were illegally felled. Since the distinct markers would reveal if the logs were from forest where logging is prohibited,

law enforcement agencies can prevent the smuggling.

Listed under Schedule IV of The Wildlife Protection Act, red sanders is a very slow growing species. The trees grow up to 10-15m in height and the species is one of the most smuggled into India.

Source: TimesofIndia

MARCH

18-19: FTMA National Conference – Geelong, VIC.
The conference is designed to expand members' perspectives by thinking beyond the conventional. Topics covered: understanding future housing scenarios, highlight potential threats to our market position, provide strategies for navigating the industrial environment, offer advice on defending your business from work cover claims, and shed light on future framing possibilities. Registrations now open at <https://conference.ftmanews.com/register-now/>

APRIL

23-24: Planned International Forest Investment Conference

– New York City. TBC

MAY

MAY 1-2: Sydney Build Expo – Sydney. Sydney Build is the only event in Australia to offer 300+ accredited presentations, 500+ exhibitors and incredible networking opportunities for all of Australia's construction, architecture, engineering and infrastructure industries.

JUNE

14: NTHA Vic/Tas State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

JULY

27: NTHA Qld State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available.

Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

AUGUST

9: NTHA SA State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

SEPTEMBER

13: NTHA NSW State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

23: Latin America Forest Investment Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.

24-25: International Woodchip and Biomass Trade Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.

25-27: Field Trip – Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil.

OCTOBER

11: NTHA WA State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

22-23: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore.
SAVE THE DATES 2025

JUNE 22-26: World Conference on Timber Engineering – Brisbane. WCTE is the world's leading scientific forum for the presentation of the latest technical and architectural solutions and innovations in timber construction.

OCTOBER 20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore.

From P 3

Additionally there are a number of state initiatives that were announced after the Bill came into effect, and requiring investment after this time, may be at risk, including:

1. The Queensland Land Restoration Fund works in conjunction with the Federal ACCU Scheme to support carbon farming projects which also deliver demonstrated environmental, socio-economic and/or First Nations co-benefits.

2. VicForests Farm Forestry Program. For more information see VicForests farm forestry (www.vicforests.com.au).
3. Victorian Carbon Farming Program. \$15.3 million for private landholders to reduce emissions and build resilience to a changing climate.
4. Gippsland \$120 million Plantation Investment Program.
5. Latrobe Valley crown land plantations.
In Western Australia, the

main plantation forestry owner is a government agency. Whilst not directly impacted by the Bill, they note that the Western Australian Government has committed \$350 million to its agency to expand the plantation estate in that State.

This investment is expected to provide at least an additional 33,000 hectares of softwood timber plantation, with up to 50 million pine trees planted, sequestering between 7.9 and 9.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

AFPA is aware of other State Governments actively considering investing in plantation establishment grants, to complement the Federal Supporting Plantation Establishment Grant program to encourage plantation establishment in their jurisdictions.

Click here to read the full submission.

On the cover: The AFPA remains concerned that the Bill (even with the Government amendments) will effectively cease plantation forestry expansion in Australia.

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Fire partially closes NSW north west State forests

FORESTRY Corporation of NSW has closed burnt areas in Bibblewindi, Jacks Creek and Pilliga East State Forests to the public following the recent Duck Creek fire.

The damage is a potential safety risk to visitors, said Forestry Corporation's Cypress Production and Fire Manager District, Conan Rossler.

"Forestry Corporation staff are currently assessing burnt areas to make sure roads and fire trails are safe for the public," Mr Rossler said.



1/ A total area of 130,000 ha was burnt during the fire.

2/ A lightning strike is believed to have been the cause of the blaze.



The Duck Creek bushfire burnt through most of December before being contained over the New Year period.

A total area of 130,000 ha was burnt during the fire, covering State forests, national parks and freehold land. Just over

79,000 ha of State forests were burnt.

Once a comprehensive assessment of all forest roads, fire trails and adjacent tree-lined areas, and any remedial works have been carried out, Forestry Corporation will look to reopen the affected areas.

"Burnt and damaged trees are a particular concern and may pose a significant risk due to falling.

"This risk is amplified during periods of high wind or when the ground is saturated after heavy rain – sections of the burnt trees might drop or indeed the

whole tree may fall over.

"Parts of the burnt forest in the Pilliga have experienced significant rain recently, so this risk is quite real."

DAMAGED TREES ARE A CONCERN

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Quintis cuts sandalwood investment schemes leaving landholders out of pocket

THE ABC reports that Northern Australian landowners have been left more than \$1 million in debt amid the winding up of a major sandalwood-managed investment scheme (MIS) portfolio.

The money is owed for land leased by Quintis subsidiary Quintis Leasing and used for MIS plantations.

The ABC's conversations with creditors indicate the unpaid contracts have negatively impacted at least six separate businesses, many of which are family-run.

Quintis Leasing has been placed into voluntary administration following an announcement by Quintis in December regarding an assessment by KPMG, which found the schemes were not financially viable.

According to the national publisher, Robert Boschhammer, a farmer in the Kimberley's Ord Valley, is owed more than \$300,000 in unpaid lease payments by Quintis Leasing.

"With Quintis Forestry no longer obliged to harvest the MIS plantation on the leased land, Mr Boschhammer believes the responsibility to remove the thousands of trees on his land will fall to him," the ABC wrote.

"[Quintis Leasing being in] administration means we've got no power as lessees to take the land back and decide what we're going to do with it," Boschhammer told the ABC.



1/ Quintis continues to own and operate 2,700 hectares of sandalwood across northern Australia. Image supplied: Quintis
2/ Quintis recorded its largest commercial harvest on record in 2022. Image supplied: Quintis



"We are stuck in limbo."

Administrators reportedly would not comment on the process.

The KPMG assessment was commissioned by Sandalwood Properties Limited (SPL), the independent body responsible for MIS sandalwood plantations managed by Quintis Forestry.

The findings prompted SPL to lodge an application with the Supreme Court of WA to wind up their sandalwood projects planted from 2007 to 2016.

Mr Boschhammer told the ABC believes the costs of removing the trees from his land will be nearly \$5 million.

"Quintis Leasing said to us before they went into administration that the leases will be forfeited. They will be given back to us," he said.

"Now I'd like them to actually make that decision and do it straight away so we can do something to manage the trees.

"Otherwise I'd like them to actually start paying some money towards [the lease] and take responsibility for the trees so they don't deteriorate."

Managed investment

schemes were introduced by the federal government under former prime minister John Howard to investors in 1998, aimed at encouraging agricultural diversification following the decline of the local forestry industry.

This came via tax incentives, which allowed investors to deduct their investments from their taxable income.

There have since been two federal reviews of the MIS structure, following the failure of seven major MIS forestry projects between 2008 and 2012.

Sandalwood and heartwood once sold for \$15,000 a tonne. (ABC Goldfields: Andrew Chounding)

University of Melbourne professor of finance Kevin Davis said the special tax concessions for agribusiness MIS investments encouraged unsophisticated investors to make risky investments.

"The fact that you can make this investment and deduct that amount against your current taxable income, and therefore reduce your taxes, is a plus in the way people's psychology operates," he said.

"Basically they discount the future."

Quintis raised \$248 million in upfront fees between 2002 and 2016 from more than 21,000 investors in its MIS sandalwood.

Quintis chief executive Richard Henfrey said the structure of the MIS system, in which investments occurred during plantings, only exacerbated the oversupply of sandalwood that prompted SPL to wind up the MIS projects.

"Yes, [those running the schemes] were certainly incentivised to sell more plantations," he said.

A middle-aged man with grey hair standing in front of a tree

Richard Henfrey says the organisation faced a tough choice in deciding to wind up the project. (Supplied: Quintis)

While Quintis has made some small plantation offloadings in the past 12 months, Professor Davis questioned its decision to remove the investors' sandalwood from the market instead of Quintis' sandalwood.

Source: ABC/ Alys Marshall

Discover the New Zealand Christmas Tree (Pohutukawa)

By **CAMPBELL MCINNES**. Part two of two.

THE Pohutukawa is able to colonise bare lava, turning volcanic rock into a spectacular garden of green, as they are evergreen. Considering the number of volcanos in New Zealand, this is a huge advantage. The Auckland Volcanic Field covers around 360 square kilometres under Auckland city. It includes 48 separate volcanoes, each of which is considered extinct.

One of these volcanos is Rangitoto (Rangitoto Island) located in the middle of the Auckland Harbour / Hauraki Gulf. Rangitoto is the youngest and largest of Auckland's dormant volcanic cones and is home to the



Pohutukawa Tree showing the grey to grey-brown bark, branches flaring out from the short trunk base and flowers have all but finished.

great New Zealand Kauri Trees. Three-quarters of all New Zealand Kauri trees are located there in the Waipoua Forest, which is also home to Tane Mahuta the largest of all the New Zealand Kauri trees, said to be around 2,000 years old. I will leave my experience with these great trees for another time..... Once back in Auckland, one of the other famous landmarks, located about halfway between Auckland CBD and the international airport is One Tree Hill, which is also another of Auckland's dormant volcanos. There used to be a single pine tree on the top of this hill, along with the monument that still stands on top of the hill today. At the base of One Tree Hill is Cornwall Park. This park is well worth a visit and has a tree trail with more than 350 species and 8000 trees. A few of the species include Cabbage Tree, Cherry Blossom, Coastal Redwood, Kauri, Moreton Bay Fig, Eucalyptus (of which there are more than 40 species

Cont P 11

world's largest Pohutukawa forest. It is a well-known island which is visible from many parts of Auckland. Visits to Rangitoto Island can be made by ferry, from the ferry wharf in Auckland.

Heading back from Russell to Auckland, I drove from the East Coast over to the West Coast, so that I did not miss the opportunity to visit and bushwalk with the

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From P 10

most planted around 1934) and a Pohutukawa tree. The Pohutukawa is one of the oldest in the park which was planted around 175 years ago.

While the Pohutukawa is native to New Zealand, the origin may have come from Australia!

On the 23rd June 2017 the Otago Daily Times reported "New Zealand's iconic Christmas Tree, the pohutukawa, may have originated from Australia, a new study says. A fossil research report from the University of Adelaide published in the American



One of the oldest trees at Cornwall Park, Auckland. This Pohutukawa is said to be around 175 years old.

Journal of Botany described the discovery of two new fossil species of pohutukawa and related species. Found near St Helens, on the east coast of Tasmania, the fossils are said to be about 25 million years old. Researcher Myall Tarran said the fossils showed the diversity of trees that once grew in Australia, and that related species of pohutukawa were part of the great supercontinent Gondawana, which included Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, New Caledonia and New Zealand. "These species may not have been as well adapted for long-distance dispersal as those other species, and so it is likely that they originated (in Australia)," Tarran said. The question still remains as to why they became extinct in Australia."

The Pohutukawa is certainly a most interesting, unique and beautiful tree which has been able to adapt to the harsh coastal conditions. If you visit New Zealand, look out for this amazing tree, even if it is not in the stunning red Christmas bloom, take time to have a look at these very unique trees.

“A MOST INTERESTING, UNIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL TREE

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Radiata pine – ‘super wood’ of the 21st century

PINE plantations began to be established in Australia from the 1870s as insurance against diminishing supplies of timber from native forests. Early attempts to find suitable pine plantation species for Australian conditions gave rise to planting trials using a wide variety of species. Pines from north and central America, Europe and the Mediterranean, from the Himalayas and Eastern Asia were all tried.

While several showed promise, the most successful was Monterey or radiata pine. This species grows naturally only in three small localities on the central Californian coast, in an area of about 5,000 hectares, stretching along the Pacific Coast in the Monterey region, south of San Francisco.

In its home state Monterey pine is greatly overshadowed in importance by Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine, not to mention the giant redwoods that grow in the locality. In California it had a reputation as a timber tree of limited utility but was used by pioneering Spanish Franciscan friars to build their mission stations in 1780s and was also used for paving-blocks and for house building in the early gold rush days.

Radiata pine, as it is now more commonly called, is one of the major plantation trees across temperate regions of the Southern Hemisphere and the basis of substantial forest industries in several



Radiata pine plantations... the mainstay of Australia's softwood industry.

countries, including Australia, New Zealand, Chile and South Africa.

The precise year when radiata pine was brought to Australia is uncertain. It may have been that seed arrived in ships' ballast in colliers returning to Newcastle from California. It has also been suggested that miners brought pine seed with them when they abandoned the Californian goldfields for the Australian gold rushes in the early 1850s. In any case, it is reasonably clear that radiata pine has been growing in Australia for about 150 years, although it took some time for the tree to attain recognition for its commercial viability.

Because it was poorly endowed with native trees suitable for timber production, South Australia was receptive to early field testing of pine species, including radiata. Much of the credit for this



initiative appears to have been due to the colony's Surveyor General Mr G W Goyder. He later attributed the lucky choice of adding radiata pine, an unknown and untried newcomer, to the list of species for trials, to advice he received from a Scottish nurseryman, Edwin Smith. The first substantial pine planting in South Australia took place in the 1870s when settlers in

most other parts of the country were still battling to ringbark or otherwise destroy native forest to make way for farms and settlements.

Wider expansion of radiata pine plantations suffered early setbacks in the first two decades of the 20th century because of soil nutrient deficiencies that took time, research, and management practice to overcome. At the time there were also strong prejudices in favour of imported softwood timber because of its perceived superior quality, size and finish. This, combined with a disbelief that Australia could grow pines capable of producing timber at all, made the going difficult for radiata pine enthusiasts.

Although there were many obstacles to surmount, radiata pine plantation effort was unflagging. Substantial research on soil nutrient requirements, plantation management procedures and the sawing and utilisation of the timber have made radiata pine the mainstay of Australia's softwood timber and paper-making industries. It has adapted readily to the temperate climate of Australia's southern States and has growth rates commonly 10 to 20 times those of native eucalypt forest, and up to 50 times that of slower-growing forests, such as cypress pine.



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Australia not on track to meet housing target

AUSTRALIA commenced construction of just 23,058 new houses in the September Quarter 2023, “the weakest quarter in over a decade and down by 21.6 per cent on the same quarter last year,” stated HIA Senior Economist, Tom Devitt.

It follows the ABS today releasing its building activity data for the September Quarter 2023 late last week.

This data provides estimates of the value of building work and a number of dwellings commenced, completed and under construction across Australia and its states and territories.

“This data reveals there were 103,707 detached houses that commenced construction in the twelve months to September 2023, down by 17.0 per cent on the 124,940 commenced in the previous twelve-month period,” added Mr Devitt.

“This points to a slow start to National Cabinet’s ambition to build 1.2 million homes over the next five years starting mid-2024.



The number of new constructions is not high enough to meet Australia’s target.

“Since the RBA’s first cash rate increase in May 2022, sales of new homes have tumbled. A number of earlier projects are also being cancelled, with banks withdrawing finance in the face of soaring building costs and shrinking homebuyer borrowing power

“This lack of new work entering the construction pipeline is expected to produce a trough in new house commencements in 2024, when Australia will start construction on just 95,400 new houses, the weakest year

in over a decade.

“There was also a decline in the number of multi-unit projects commencing construction, down by 9.6 per cent in the September Quarter 2023 to just 13,916, one of the weakest quarters in over a decade.

“Multi-unit commencements are mounting a recovery on the

“A TROUGH IN NEW HOUSE COMMENCEMENTS IS EXPECTED

back of population growth and land constraints, with Australia expected to commence 84,400 new multi-units in 2024.

“This would still put total detached and multi-unit commencements at less than 180,000 in 2024, far below the 240,000 per annum required to meet National Cabinet’s target.

“As fewer new projects begin construction, the pipeline of work that Australia’s home builders have under construction is expected to shrink rapidly this year.

“Meeting National Cabinet’s target will be largely dependent on the delivery of adequate private housing across the housing continuum. This will also have the biggest impact on the cost of housing and rental availability.

“Holding all levels of government to account for improving planning regimes, reducing red tape, and supporting the development of appropriate infrastructure and a skilled construction workforce, must be a priority this year,” concluded Mr Devitt.

Source: HIA

Vic cutters told to stop early

FIVE months ahead of the planned mid-year cut-off, firewood, fence post and speciality timber cutters will be banned from harvesting standing and fallen timber.

According to the Weekly Times, fifty licensees, who operate under Victoria’s community forestry program, have been told to wrap up operations by Feb 5. Previously they were told they had until the end of the financial year to do so, with some likely to gain exemptions to continue

beyond that date.

However, VicForests chief executive Monique Dawson wrote to all forest product licensees this month warning all harvesting would have to stop in less than a fortnight, due to Supreme Court action by the Wombat Forestcare group.

“We are disappointed to let you know that VicForests will not defend the current court proceedings brought against it by Wombat Forestcare, in which injunctions are being

sought to prevent operations collecting windthrown timber following the 2021 storms in the Wombat State Forest, as well as other small community forestry operations throughout the Midlands and Bendigo forest management areas,” Ms Dawson said.

“Unfortunately, what that means is that we can no longer continue the community forestry program because of the risk of litigation to VicForests and to licensees and the associated direct legal cost.

“The court is also requiring what in VicForests view is a disproportionate survey effort for the type of operations encompassed by community forestry.

“As such, this means all community forestry operations will cease by February 5, 2024.”

it is understood VicForests was put under legal pressure to survey harvesting sites for up to 50 threatened species, which it regarded as unviable given the staff time and cost.

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Mass Timber 'Treehouse' revamps seniors living

THE Treehouse - "Retirement Living" is constructed by Element5 in conjunction with Farrow Partnership Architects Ontario, and has developed a new approach to senior living, constructed with mass timber.

Proposing a new typology for senior living as a community-based concept that integrates the benefits of timber with a design that improves the physical and mind health of older people.

The name Treehouse derives from the concept's key feature: a double-height common area located four stories above ground level. Accessible by elevators, but intended primarily by a set of open stairs, this upper-level perch offers a constant connection to the outside world through aerial views and tree canopy sightlines, providing residents with an ongoing relationship with the changing seasons, weather patterns and time of day.

Typically, multi-unit housing locates common areas, such as dining rooms and shared kitchens, on the ground level, with residential units above. Several benefits emerge when these gathering spaces are placed higher up, where windows bring in daylight. The visual prospect and sensory stimulation derived from aerial views is especially important for those who may have



1/ The mass timber building is changing seniors living.
2/ The companies behind the developments specialise in mass timber structures.

mobility issues and can't easily venture outdoors.

Element5 is a mass timber manufacturer specializing in the design, fabrication and assembly of contemporary timber structures. We work with solid wood, the world's most flexible and only renewable building resource.

Our products are: CLT, Glulam, CLIPs, Boxx and nanoCLT. Element5 is unlike any other mass timber firm in the sector.

“INTEGRATES THE BENEFITS OF TIMBER”

We are a focused and dedicated team of designers, craftspeople and assembly experts. According to their website, they serve a community of forward-thinking architects, owners, developers, and general contractors by providing timber construction cost consulting, design consulting, engineering, fabrication and assembly services.

Their integrated customer-oriented approach ensures the delivery of high-precision timber structures. Founded in 2015, with offices in Toronto and a manufacturing plant in St. Thomas, Element5 are innovators in the mass timber construction

revolution.

"We view timber as the essential building material of the 21st century and strive to make a positive contribution to communities, the environment and future generations."

Source: Mass Timber Group via LinkedIn

British Columbia sawmill to close

WEST Fraser Timber Co. Ltd. has announced it will permanently close its sawmill in Fraser Lake, British Columbia, following an orderly wind-down. Today's decision is the result of West Fraser's inability to access

economically viable fibre in the region.

The closure of Fraser Lake Sawmill will impact approximately 175 employees. West Fraser expects to mitigate the impact on affected employees by

providing work opportunities at other West Fraser operations.

"We do not make these decisions lightly", said Sean McLaren, President & CEO, West Fraser. "We know this announcement has a

significant impact on our employees, their families, our suppliers and the local community, who all rely on a healthy forest industry."

The mill closure will

Cont P 17

New CEO for Canadian Forest Owners

CANADIAN Forest Owners (CFO) has announced the appointment of Andrew de Vries as Chief Executive Officer of the national organization of private forest owners, effective February 1, 2024. CFO represents 450,000 forest landowners, large and small, who are committed to long-term sustainable forest management for a healthy climate and thriving communities.

As leader of CFO, de Vries brings with him over 30 years experience in natural resource management across Canada, the United States and internationally where he has developed expertise in sustainability and conservation biology, as well as community, Indigenous and government relations.

"Everyday CFO members are managing their forests to enhance biodiversity, help mitigate climate change, and maintain fresh water supplies and habitats while also providing important economic and social benefits to rural communities across Canada. Andrew's extensive experience in natural resource management and strong policy background will help CFO continue its advocacy work with governments to create good policy that benefit communities from coast to coast," said CFO Chair



Andrew is well known in the Canadian forest sector.

Susannah Banks.

De Vries's appointment marks the retirement of CFO Executive Director Jean-Pierre Martel, who helped raise awareness about the importance of private forest land in Canada. Martel worked tirelessly with CFO's Executive to successfully position Canadian Forest Owners as a key part of the solution to the challenges facing Canada's forest sector. Together, de Vries and Martel are working to ensure a smooth transition for CFO members, partners, and government colleagues.

"We are pleased to have someone of Andrew's calibre leading Canadian Forest Owners. He is well known in the Canadian forest sector and abroad through

his professional roles, as well as in Ottawa. Andrew has demonstrated his ability to balance a variety of perspectives and interests while having intimate knowledge of private land forest management," added CFO Vice-Chair Domenico Iannidinardo.

De Vries said, "Canadians are proud of their

forests, and I am pleased to follow the trail that Jean-Pierre has blazed and represent CFO's membership across Canada. They manage 25 million hectares of land and can provide tremendous benefits in the face of climate change and other challenges that come our way."

CFO is grateful to Jean-Pierre for his efforts, working for over two years to demonstrate the commitment of private forest owners to long-term, resilient forests and a healthy climate. "I am very proud of what we have accomplished," said Martel, "and I truly believe that the role of private forest owners is key to the future of the Canadian forest sector."

and close our sawmill in Maxville, Florida better align our capacity with demand and available sources of economic fibre," said McLaren. "We believe these initiatives, along with the decision to divest three pulp assets and acquire Spray Lake Sawmills in 2023 make West Fraser stronger

through the cycle."

West Fraser anticipates recording restructuring and impairment charges of approximately \$81 million in the fourth quarter of 2023 related to facility closures and curtailments due to availability of economic fibre sources in British Columbia.



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From P 16

reduce West Fraser's Canadian lumber capacity by approximately 160 million board feet.

"Today's announcement, combined with our recent decision to indefinitely curtail operations at Huttig, Arkansas

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